

VIEWS OF OUR PUGS

Will They Divide the Purse if They Fight?

ARTHUR T. LUMLEY'S OPINION

Prize Fighters—The "Infamous Corbett-Mitchell Match"—Will They Divide the Prize Money?

Years of association with fighters have impressed me with the extreme gullibility of the American sporting public. I refer to the fraternity not as a whole, and except those with intelligence enough to look beneath the surface and think for themselves. The most remarkable evidence of gullibility is to be found in the now famous, or, to be more frank, infamous, Mitchell-Corbett match. These two fighters for months have had the English and American sporting public by the ears and have been "throwing in the coin" in such a finished manner that some of their enemies and detractors, even, think they mean to be on the level.

In the history of the prize ring no two such fakirs have been brought to view. By a system of buncombe, devilish in its ingenuity and remarkable for its surprise, these two men have placed themselves in a position to be talked about in every country where the word pugilism is known. This fact alone would stamp them as fakirs. Honest men do not run into print at the slightest provocation. If they have any idea in mind they do not run to a newspaper and blow it into the ear of a friendly reporter. The old-time fighters didn't pursue this course. Did Heenan and Sayres attend to Corbett and Mitchell as attendants? When these two warriors of the ring met and agreed to fight there were no pyrotechnics, no display of one thousand-dollar bills (with strings attached), and no buncombe. The articles were quickly arranged and as quickly signed. Heenan and Sayres appreciated the fact that such was battling for the championship of his respective country, and his dignity alone was sufficient. Columns of newspaper talk could not add to the honor in their eyes.

Note the difference. Here are two pugilists, one Mitchell, a man who has shown comparatively little to warrant reputation, and Corbett, a fighter, who, since his defeat of Sullivan, has been a human hippodrome. And where does Mitchell's reputation as a pugilist come in? He should be known as the "man of straw." He is not England's champion. Peter Jackson holds this honor. He has never whipped a first-class man, and his chief claim to distinction is his draw with Sullivan.

Corbett shows up in better light. He has fought and whipped a number of clever men, and up to the time he met Sullivan he had some reputation and a few friends. How much reputation and how many friends has he now? I will not answer this question. I will leave it to the judgment of my readers. But had Corbett seen fit to be on the level he could have been the most popular champion this country has ever seen.

Here is one experience I had with him which will indicate his character. A little over a year and a half ago it was proposed to match Mitchell and Corbett for six rounds in the Madison Square garden. When Corbett came to be called on me and said he would fight me to be his adviser. He would be guided by me, he said, in all things. A few days later he called again and wanted me to go to the Clipper office with him and arrange for a finish fight between him and Mitchell. I consented, and suggested that we take a cab.

Corbett agreed, and added: "Oh, yes. Let us have a cab, Arthur. I show you, you know." Before agreeing to go to the Clipper office with him it was arranged that he should meet Mitchell on his own ground; that there should be no jolly-fing, and that only business should be discussed. We arrived at the Clipper office, where Mitchell was awaiting us. Imagine my surprise at the way Mitchell and Corbett greeted each other. It must be understood that these two men were supposed to be in daggers drawn, and that there was no love lost between them.

Corbett started his jolly as follows: "My dear Mr. Mitchell, I'm very glad to see you. I have heard you are a very skillful boxer, and a thorough good fellow. It is an honor, my boy, to meet you, and I hope we will see more of each other," and more talk in a similar vein.

It was then Mitchell's turn to jolly, and he began this way:

"Exactly expected to meet such a gentleman. Why, Mr. Corbett, while I have always heard you were a nice fellow, you have exceeded my ideas. I understand, too, you are a great pugilist. Believe me, my boy, this is one of the greatest moments of my life, and I will always remember the occasion."

And then Mitchell and Corbett fell on each other's necks and wept for joy at the meeting.

Great Jehosophat! Shades of John J. Sullivan! And these two men met to make a match on the level.

I was disgusted, and told Corbett so, and left him to continue his jolly-fing. The articles were signed for a six-round go, for the gate money, and had the men met they would have jolled the public and got the money. This bit of insincerity was not enough to completely over me, however. I said to myself: "Perhaps I am mistaken. There may be some good in these two men, after all. I'll reserve judgment."

And then came the Sullivan fight, and the latter's defeat. Now, I said, Corbett will have a chance to show himself. If there is good in him it will come out. If there is fake, he will show it.

Hardly had he won the fight than he began to throw his friends. Mike Donovan, who provided nearly \$5,000 of the \$10,000 stake money, was the first. Donovan had been his friend and adviser for years. What did Corbett care for this friendship? What was friendship to him? A mere name.

Next he threw Charlie Stenzel, of Boston, a man who loved him as a brother.

During the past month Corbett has had the door in this "International Fake Match." He has talked and written letters, and when voice and pen gave out the same was taken up at the place

it was left off by Billy Brady. Brady, carrying out the hippodromic idea, came here and called a congress of newspaper men together. He and Dick Newton talked always with the newspaper men within hearing and called again, without accomplishing anything. It was the continuation of the old fake—the fake that started in the World office when the ten thousand dollar stake was put up and when Mitchell and Brady talked and talked and talked, always with the idea that the newspaper men would print what they said.

Coming down to the recent meeting in the Coleman house, little good can be found in the talk.

Even the Columbian A. C. was affected by the atmosphere of bluff that surrounded the negotiations and emitted a little wind on its own account. Director General O'Malley came to the front and magnanimously proclaimed that the C. I. A. C. were welcome to the Corbett-Mitchell match if they would bid \$65,000 and obtain Mitchell's signature. Moreover, the Chicago people would generously sell tickets to help Corbett along and charge no commission. "We would do this in the interest of sport purely," says O'Malley. In the next breath the same gentleman stated that he already had Mitchell's signature and Corbett's, also, the latter being conditional on the procuring of the Englishman's name. Was it a jolly, or what? There must have been a considerable element of bluff in O'Malley's remarks, for the day after he said he had Mitchell's signature that remarkable person stated for publication that he would sign nothing until he reached America.

Corbett complains he was roasted by the different sporting newspaper writers throughout the country. If he was on the level would he receive this baiting? Here is a part of what Eugene Field, the Chicago poet, says about him:

"Mr. Corbett belongs to a limited—fortunately limited—class of people who are too mean to get drunk. This, however, is not the limit to his meanness. Elsewhere he is as low and as brutal as the veriest thumper that loafs about the street corners and the dramshops. His instincts are just as brutal and his practices are even more despicable, for it is not with liquor in his veins, but in cold blood, that he goes his infamous way. There is nothing in this man to admire. His career from the first has been vicious. He presents no aspect that is not to be despised, and more odious than all his other vicious aspects is that mean, low, cowardly hypocrisy of his under which he is continually seeking to hide his moral rotteness."

Field is not a sporting writer, but a keen observer. What he says is the impression of an intelligent, thinking man.

These are a few of the things which lead me to believe that the Mitchell-Corbett fight is a colossal fake, and that if they ever do come together the money will be divided and the sporting public will be duped. Read the writing on the wall. To offer a \$65,000 purse for these two fakirs is absurd.

ARTHUR T. LUMLEY.

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